Perpetual Attraction: Drabbles

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Perpetual Attraction: Drabbles

by orphan_account

Summary

A selection of artist AU drabbles.

Bodypaint: Will's got the munchies and Nigel returns from the store to find a surprise waiting for him.

The Wedding: Will and Nigel visit America for Hannibal's wedding but it's not Bedelia Hannibal wants.

Primary ship is Will Graham/Nigel Lecter, other ships mentioned are minor.

Body Paint

The sun was setting low in the sky and tangy smoke flowed out of the rustic loft studio. Every surface was covered in paint, food or some narcotic. The shadeless overhead bulb flickered a yellowish orange light as the moths danced around it in a blissful daze.

Will's glasses had been long abandoned Nigel's shirt had found itself wrapped around his head as if it was a headband, keeping his curls out from his eyes. Nigel would want them trimmed soon but Will was enjoying them for what they were at that moment.

"'*Give your heart into those violent passions.*'" Will laid on the mattress, head resting on Nigel's chest as he scribbled in a dog-eared notebook. Every few minutes he'd recite what he'd written only to erase and modify the lyric. He had admitted he wasn't a great poet, but he wanted to try something new.

"Mmhm?" Nigel took another toke of the joint and released more smoke into the foggy air. "Violent passions?'

"Ah! Yeah." Will cleared his throat and squinted at the words. He definitely needed his glasses but they were out of arm's reach.

"'If there is one pleasure to be found at sea or on ground,

It is the passion of pain.

The heat of fear and the race of your pulse against

My bare bone.'"

Nigel watched how Will's pink lips were flushed and how they shone with saliva as he poked out his tongue between every stanza. His fingers danced across the hot skin of Will's neck and let himself ride the waves of Will's bad poem. He was certain he'd been hypnotised and zoned out at some point. He wasn't sure how many stanzas he'd missed.

"'You make me remember the pain,

So I can savour the taste of pleasure.'" Will looked proud of his achievement as he leaned up to catch Nigel's lips. At least that way Nigel understood the poem had been about him.

Nigel moaned, taking the kiss as the go ahead to have another round of sex. His hands traced the curve of Will's spine and down to his ass before he found Will had wriggled out of their embrace. "Where the fuck are you going? We were about to have some fun." Nigel wriggled his hips to reveal how affected by Will he was. "Come back to bed baby."

“No no.” Will crouched by their small fridge and tried to hunt for food. His golden tanned back faced Nigel, teasing what he could have had. “You have to go---- go get me some ice cream and chips. And a bagel. Oooh.” Will spun around and sat, spread-legged on the rough wooden floor. “Bagel with cream cheese and salmon.”

Nigel watched Will with a glazed expression, imagining everything he could do to Will if they had the ice cream. Swiping spoonfuls of vanilla or chocolate up Will’s belly and licking his way down to Will’s hips.

“Hey! Nige. Food, plea--se.” Will rubbed his belly and started to crawl back to their mattress. “I’m starving.”

Nigel smirked and nodded slowly. “Get dressed. We can go together.”

“No. You go. And I’ll be here. Right here.”

Will was always too stubborn like this and Nigel was well aware he wouldn’t get him to move unless he shook one of two things in front of him. This time it had to be food.

Once Nigel had stuffed himself in his too-small pants and adjusted himself to hide his arousal, he tugged at Will’s makeshift headband. Will’s protests were so weak that Nigel had the Dachshund bowling shirt on in minutes. He kissed Will’s head and told him to behave before he left.

The trip was uneventful. All Nigel struggled with was his daydreams and what ice cream to cover Will with. So he bought one of every flavour. The chips were easier, just a plain old multipack was on the menu. Nigel had to travel to the all-night café to get Will’s beloved bagel, so he’d been gone a good hour before he returned to the studio.

“Got the food but will need another smoke…” Nigel stopped halfway through the door when he saw all of his dust sheets covering the walls and his model’s couch.

Will was reclined back on his elbows. He was arched up, completely exposed in front of the large window. His whole body was painted as he replicated the oil painting of ‘Apollo in the Golden Sun’ that Nigel had done of him.

Nigel stepped into the place and let the door swing shut behind him. “What the fuck is this?” His smirk simply added to the amused glint in his eye.

“I am your model. Do with me what you will!” He chuckled before he rolled off of the couch and started to slowly approach Nigel.

Nigel squinted at him, suspicious of Will’s intentions.

Will’s steps began to speed up and Nigel dropped the bags. “No, Will. Will stop it. No---.” He bolted left before Will could touch him with his grubby painted arms. This was not what he’d envisioned when he had first seen Will like that.

“Body painting, asshole!” Will laughed and chased after Nigel, catching him and toppling onto the couch. “Ah ha.”

“No Will! This is my favourite fucking shirt.”

“Mmhm, I know. It’s mine, too.” Will nuzzled his paint covered face into Nigel’s armpit and left a golden mess all over it. “You should wear only this next time we…” He leaned up and whispered into Nigel’s ear, “Next time we make *love*.” He nipped Nigel’s ear before clambering up.

“Make love? Call it what it fucking is, babe. It’s fucking.” Nigel grinned kicked off his pants and shoes. He dipped his fist in the pot of gold body paint. “And I think you want it.”

“It?” Will turned around from the food and hugged his tub of ice cream. “Oh, well you’re gonna have to work to get ‘it’ from me.”

They chased each other around the apartment all night, covering each other with paint and ice cream. All of those messy kisses and frantic tumbles left art across the walls.

Exhausted, Will laid on the mattress. He could see the imprint where Nigel had pinned him with the ice cream and smeared it across his face. He could see where Nigel had lifted him up high and pressed him to a dust sheet to leave a Superman imprint. Or where Will had kneeled for Nigel and adored every inch of him.

Nigel was sound asleep beside him as he pulled out a camera and snapped each print they’d left. If they ever parted, he’d forever have this.

The Wedding

Chapter Summary

> This is a longer drabble that could probably stand as its own short fic. If you like it, comment below and I might expand it and make it a fic all of its own!

"You don't think he's gonna be weird?" Will's heart was like a hummingbird's. He'd never met any of Nigel's family and he'd heard how judgemental Hannibal was. Not to mention the fact that Hannibal had religiously bought paintings portraying Will's likeness. He knew he was a stuffed-shirted shrink who liked to poke at Nigel's walls and that it had been why Nigel stayed behind in Europe when he had left for medical school. They sounded close, but better apart than together.

It felt like Will was on his way to court, awaiting a verdict.

Nigel took Will's warm hand in his own, enveloping the slim fingers and savouring the twitches that they gave in recognition. "Hannibal *is* fucking weird. But he's harmless if you're with me." It was a lie, but Nigel suffered a quite different set of fears. There was a darkness in this world that Will should never know. Will was nothing but an artist – too empathetic and gentle for Hannibal's world. Not to mention the fact that he had always had a *taste* for Nigel's partners.

As the cab pulled up outside a lavish mini-manor of a house, Will felt the lump in his throat grow. He had always known Hannibal had money. He had been funding his and Nigel's way of life, after all. It had just never dawned on Will just how *much* money Hannibal had. No wonder he was protective of Nigel – he was set to inherit at least a million.

"I mean about the paintings. He won't look down at me?"

"He looks down on everyone." Nigel climbed out, worrying which of the paintings were in Hannibal's dining room. It better not have been Will as Leda.

Will stepped out of and around the car, burdening himself with their heavy suitcases before tackling the steep staircase. His heart thudded harder with each step. He knew he was being ridiculous, but he knew how close family members could get when all they had were each other.

Following behind, Nigel kept his eyes off of Will's ass. Even *his* libido died at the thought of this meeting. If he could read Will's mind, he would have understood the reason. This place had the stench of doom.

As they reached the top, Nigel reached over Will and rang the doorbell. He pressed his lips on Will's temple as he passed and whispered words of comfort in his ear. "He's got great fucking taste, baby. He'll love you almost as much as I do."

As the door opened it revealed a pristine man who was both the exact replica and complete opposite to Nigel. His subtle smile pierced Will like a knife.

"Ah, Nigel and… William?" Hannibal's smile broadened as he noticed how accurate the paintings had been. Of all the things in the paintings, he couldn't believe the eyes were so accurate. Large and sapphire, they could reach into his soul.

"I need money for the cab," Nigel said. He gestured to the waiting taxi at the gate.

Hannibal sighed and subtly rolled his eyes as he pulled out his wallet. He gave Nigel a twenty and watched his brother leave. The one redeeming feature of that was that it left Hannibal some time to talk with Will. Taking one of the suitcases from him, Hannibal led Will through the large entrance hallway.

It was unbelievable how beautiful the cross of gothic and the modern could be and Will almost forgot about his nerves. That was until he noticed one of the more lewd pieces Nigel had sold hanging in pride of place above the lounge fireplace. '*Modern Ganymede'* had been one of Will's favourites but also the one picture he was most self-conscious about… besides the Leda picture.

Hannibal caught where Will's eyes had reached and let his lips curl up. "I believe this is one of my brother's finest pieces." Worth every penny. It was often a subject of heated discussion with his guests. It was likely very responsible for how he and Bedelia had become romantic, in all actuality. "My fiancée finds it quite intellectually stimulating."

Will dragged his eyes from the image and immediately focussed on setting his bags down and taking in the rest of the room. He actively avoided looking at Hannibal or the paintings. He just wanted Nigel to reappear and save him from his embarrassment.

"Bedelia is not fond of modelling for me, but she has done it once or twice." Hannibal poured four glasses of wine from the bottle waiting on the drinks cabinet.

"You paint?" Will glanced over at him.

"I prefer to sketch. However, it is a simple hobby that doesn't hold much practical use in my field." Hannibal passed Will one of the glasses. There was a long pulse of silence as Will took the wine, avoiding Hannibal's attempt at forcing eye contact.

An elegant woman appeared from the shadows, taking her wine and retiring back to wherever she had been hiding.

Something about her struck Will. Her coldness was clinical and he could feel the strange resentment come off of her in waves.

Nigel soon reappeared and took all of Hannibal's attention, letting Will hide away with a book from Hannibal's domestic collection. He didn't want to get in between the brothers as they caught up from over ten years. Not to mention that Hannibal creeped him out. There was something behind those smiles that sent shivers down his spine. They had not known each other an hour and he sounded like a past lover.

When Nigel came upstairs to the spare bedroom, Will looked the picture of sophistication. Even his scruffy stubble and paint-stained pyjama pants couldn't distract him from the way Will looked while reading classical literature. He looked like he could have been with either brother and that made Nigel's blood boil.

The sex that night was unlike any they'd had before. It was frantic, passionate and left both covered in deep bite marks. Will felt jealousy had played a part in just how rough they were with each other but he couldn't tell why, exactly.

Three long days passed and Nigel found himself dragged around by Hannibal as he organised and finalised some bits for the wedding. They left Will with the bridesmaids, Alana and Margot. It was safer that way, keeping Hannibal from seeping his poisonous influence into Will's ear. Little did he know that it was his own actions that felt like the poison in Will's blood.

Will spent the days walking Alana's dog Applesauce and talking to Margot about her personal situation. She was gay with a homophobic brother – as far as Will could tell. All she wanted to do was life a free life away from him but she had no way of escaping it.

"It's a shame you don't have a brother like Hannibal who is open and accepting of Nigel's lifestyle." Will threw a ball across the green lawns.

Margot kept her hands in her fur arm muff and watched Will speak. He was not entirely unhandsome, his voice pleasant to the ears – even if it was rougher than her usual type. "I don't want a sibling relationship like theirs."

Will chuckled with a deep frown. "They're the ideal, aren't they?"

"Not if you believe Bedelia." Margot began to walk through the snow towards the icy pond.

Whistling for Applesauce, Will followed her. "What did Bedelia say?"

"Hannibal has a way with the men and the women – mostly Nigel's men and women." Margot cleared a bench of snow and sat down.

Will scoffed as he sat beside her. "I don't believe Hannibal could do that." Yes, Will understood how there could be some confusion and mistakes made, but he personally didn't feel any desire to climb into bed with Nigel's brother. After all, he had been reasonably straight before he fell for Nigel. Hannibal was just another man.

"Well that's what Bedelia claims." Margot smiled as she noticed Alana return with some coffees. "Just don't tell anyone I told you that."

That night, he tried to show how much he appreciated Nigel. He bought Nigel's favourite beer a baggy of weed and set them on the bedside table. He texted Nigel to come up as soon as he could and waited naked on the bed for a good hour before he'd fallen asleep.

When he'd awoken the next morning, he found the beer had been drunk and the weed was all but ashes now. Where Nigel should have been was a hastily scribbled note.

'Hey baby, you looked so fucking good I couldn't wake you up last night. Thanks for the presents. See you tonight to make up for last night! :P '

Will felt like a fucking girl when he fought back tears in the shower. He knew being back in America was playing with his emotions, but he had only agreed to come because he knew Nigel was going to be his rock. Now he was left with the sore memories, made ever worse by the neglect. The violent thoughts were returning and no matter how hard he scrubbed, he could feel the thick viscous blood pool between his fingers.

Once he'd finished with his shower, Will visited a nearby gallery with Margot. They were silent for almost the whole time until they noticed one painting Will recognised. The image was of a young angel walking through post-apocalyptic New Orleans, a halo in one hand and handcuffs in the other.

It was the first image of Will that Nigel had ever sold to Hannibal.

It had been a deeply personal image, Will's nude form revealing each scar from his short time as a cop.

"Hannibal must've… donated it." A lump formed in Will's chest and his breathing faltered. He knew it was bound to happen at some point but never had he expected Hannibal to have passed them on.

Margot placed her hand on Will's shoulder and guided him to sit on one of the small couches. She rubbed small circles into his back. "He was probably just trying to get Nigel's art known. Boost their worth. Artists are worth nothing without their name – and almost no one knew him in 2008."

"That's bullshit and we both know it."

Margot shrugged and placed a hand on Will's knee. "I'm sorry."

That evening, Will had intended on telling Nigel what happened until he noticed how happy he was with his brother. They were making jokes without the need of drugs and Will felt sick with guilt for even wanting to bring it up. So instead he kept it to himself.

The next morning, Will joined the wedding party at the rehearsal. Spending the morning on his own was the last thing he wanted to do.

The cathedral was overly luxurious and he felt himself shrink into the background. Everyone's attention was turned to Hannibal and his lovely bride – as it should be. But Will was so used to Nigel's undivided attention that his world felt empty without it. He felt like a stranger looking in through frosted glass.

He found himself trying to catch Margot's eye, just so he could offer nonverbal communication to *someone*. The only eye he caught was the knowing glint of Hannibal's.

The rest of the day Will was urged to spend more time with the bridesmaids as they visited a spa to get 'prettied up' for the wedding. He didn't even like spas but he reluctantly agreed because Margot was being kinder to him than his own boyfriend. He couldn't spend another moment on his own or watching Nigel spend all of his time with his brother.

Will couldn't believe how childish he was being. He was well aware that what he and Nigel had was a completely different type of love to the brothers'. But being back in America was a struggle as it was. He felt like he was adrift at sea on a different life raft to Nigel and Hannibal. He couldn't wait to go back home to France.

Bedelia stayed over at Alana Bloom's, leaving Will with the Lecter twins for dinner. Across the table, Will watched Hannibal and Nigel joke and share long glances between bites of their food. The atmosphere was so thick, Will had to leave the table before he flipped it.

When Nigel finally came to bed, Will was in no mood to have any kind of intimacy. He recoiled from Nigel's touch and let him wonder what he'd done. If Nigel cared enough he would pursue him. But he didn't. Of course he didn't.

Nigel was hurt, confused and more than a little angry. He'd spent the day reconnecting with his brother only to find Will distancing himself from him. Hannibal must've done or said something to make Will act like this. It hurt to think that anything Hannibal could say was doing this to their beautiful relationship. But Hannibal did this to all of Nigel's loves. He thought Will would be different.

The next morning, Will and Nigel dressed in their suits across the room from each other. Will hadn't even looked at Nigel between then and waking up.

Will focussed all of his attention on the way he tied the Windsor knot of the silk fabric around his neck. The way the silk would feel soaked in blood, the softness lost as its fibers became defiled. The way Hannibal would choke on his own saliva as Will knelt above him, dragging the knot tighter over his Adam's apple.

Warm arms wrapped around his waist, dragging him from his violent thoughts. Nigel's breath misted against his neck. "Any tighter and the Windsor will become a nut." His larger hands batted Will's hands away and began to re-tie Will's knot.

"I'm not in the mood for this, Nigel." Will stood stock still, trying to avoid goading him on to more intimate touches.

"Nigel?" The warm breath suddenly chilled Will to his core.

“Hannibal?” Will turned his head slightly, catching a close up glimpse of the too-well shaven Hannibal.

Panic set in, suddenly understanding why Nigel’s partners always cheated on him with his brother. Hannibal looked exactly like him for that moment. And he’d been *compelling*. But now Will knew, he wouldn’t fall prey to it. He stepped away and began to comb his hair. “Shouldn’t you be somewhere? Like with your bride?”

“Not yet. We have two hours before we must leave and Nigel has gone to get the champagne.” Hannibal’s hand grazed the small of Will’s back.

Will turned to face Hannibal, comb still in hand. “Look, I don’t know what kind of fucking game you think you’re playing, stop. Just stop!” He combed through his hair, tugging hard at a tangle. “Shit.”

Hannibal smirked and pried the comb from Will’s hand. “There is no game.” He began to gently tease the tangles from Will’s hair. “I am aware of your position with Nigel and mine with Bedelia.”

Will flinched away from the comb. “Then you know I will not be fucking you or any man that isn’t him!” He stormed out of the bedroom and found Nigel coming up from the wine cellar with a bottle in hand.

They were blind to each other, Nigel was still hurting from last night's rejection. Even though Will wanted to run into Nigel’s arms and tell him everything, the fire burning in his chest made punching him more likely. And neither wanted to hurt the other without proof of some form of betrayal.

The wedding took Nigel’s mind from Will. Bedelia’s dress was like something from a fairytale and Hannibal was everything he wished he could have been in another life.

Will sat at the front of the groom’s side, chest rising and falling with panic. He couldn’t keep the unnameable grim feeling from bubbling up from his skin like tar. He wanted to jump up and declare his love for Nigel. He wanted to punch Hannibal and tell Bedelia that Hannibal was a cheat.

But he stayed seated like a good little pawn. Instead he let his mind roll over the puzzle pieces, putting them together bit by bit.

Hannibal had found something appealing in Will, which was why he constantly bought portraits of him. Hannibal also wanted his brother’s paintings to be worth far more so he could sell them for double what he had paid. A man with money only stays that way if they maintain profit. He wasn’t just doing this out of the kindness in his heart.

And Nigel didn’t know?

Will clutched at his knees, fingers digging into the rough fabric of his pants. And Hannibal… no. Hannibal wasn’t attracted to Will. He was attracted to having the upper hand over his

brother. Dependence. Hannibal couldn't bear the fact Nigel had someone else he could turn to. It was why he had 'stolen' all of Nigel's partners in the past.

But Nigel hadn't been helping. Nigel had been avoiding Will completely. But perhaps Will was the reason?

Once the ceremony was over, Will took a car with Nigel to the ballroom reception. Nigel was actively avoiding Will's touch, but he wasn't going to let that stop him from getting it all off of his chest.

"Nigel." Will turned to him. "Why are you avoiding me?"

Nigel's brow formed a deep crease and his teeth glinted in the flashes of passing street lamps. "I'm not fucking avoiding anyone."

"Look, I get it. I know Hannibal has a way of-" Will cut short as he caught eye contact with Nigel.

"A way of what?"

"Uh-Uhm. Of coercing your partners to bed."

Nigel unbuckled his seatbelt and twisted in his seat. Grabbing Will's tie, he pulled hard and bought him nose to nose. "And have you fucking betrayed me, *sweetheart*?"

"No!" Will tried to pull away, readying to defend himself.

"Can never be sure with you." Nigel caught Will's lip with his teeth and drew blood.

The sharp pain made Will growl in frustration. He shoved Nigel off of him and wiped his finger across his lip. "You bastard!"

He turned to the driver and ordered him to stop. The moment the car skidded to a halt, Will ran from it and stormed to the park nearby. He couldn't handle Nigel like this. Will was being punished as if he had already cheated, and he'd never even touched Hannibal.

"I thought that was you." Margot appeared from the small gap in the hedges.

"Isn't it a little dangerous for a woman to be in an unlit park on her own?" Will sat up, smirking away the pain of Nigel's bite.

"You think I'm scared of a park when I have my brother at home? Please." She sat beside him and pulled out a bottle of whiskey from her small purse. She took a long swig and offered Will the bottle. "If I can survive Mason, I can survive a little old murderer. And anyway, I'm not on my own."

Will took the bottle and gulped down the whiskey before twisting the lid on. "Oh yeah?"

"Yeah. So, what he do to you?"

“Your brother?”

“No, Nigel. You were supposed to be carpooling with him, right?”

Will sucked his split lip, the copper of his blood bringing the brief moment of madness to reality again. “He thinks I slept with Hannibal.” Which was ridiculous. When had Will had time to sneak off with Hannibal?

“He sounds paranoid.” Margot took the bottle and had another sip.

“He’s already punishing me for something I’ve never done. I never planned on doing.” Will sighed and took the bottle again.

They sat in a peaceful silence as they passed the small bottle between them until it was finished.

“Was that picture accurate?” Margot slipped the empty bottle back into her purse.

“Which one?”

“The one at the gallery. Do you really have all those scars?”

Will nodded silently.

“I’ll show you mine if you show me your’s.”

Will turned to face her for the first time since sitting there with her. “I thought you had a different set of tastes, Margot?”

“I’m not asking for romance and you’re not unhandsome.” She stood and took his hands. Urging him up, Margot began undoing his tie and slowly working his buttons.

The shirt opened, falling from his shoulders to reveal the puckered skin of the bullet scar. Margot’s fingers danced across his chest, fingers tracing the wound. It was almost as beautiful as Hannibal had told her a scar could be.

Will’s chest rose and fell, his own fingers pulling at the straps of her dress. “Turn around,” he said.

Margot obeyed, pulling her hair aside to show him her own beautiful scars. In the pale moonlight, her porcelain skin glowed. She really was beautiful. His painter’s fingers were soft as they caressed her skin. “Beautiful.” Her scars sent him back to the first time Nigel had revealed his to Will.

Will stepped back, struggling to do this. He wanted to but Nigel was already struggling to trust him.

Margot turned around and cupped his chin. “This is justice.”

When the pleasure had faded, he watched Margot adjusting her misshapen dress and leave for the wedding reception.

Will felt empty.

Unsatisfied.

It hadn't been worth it.

When Will arrived at the reception, Nigel greeted him drunk.

"Where the fuck were you?" he said, grip hard on Will's shoulder. "Where the *fuck* were you, William?"

"I went to the park."

"Fucking funny how Margot came back from the park, too."

"You're paranoid."

"Explain why you look so fucking guilty, then. And fucking explain this!" Nigel slammed a phone into Will's chest. When he looked, he realised it was a picture of Margot and himself kissing.

"Fuck."

"Hannibal told me every. Fucking. Thing." Nigel gripped Will's arm tight. "And we're going home."

Will wanted to fight back but knew that if he did he'd likely end up hurt. He deeply loved Nigel and this had been a… a grave mistake. But he'd felt so alone and persecuted for crimes he'd never committed. What would have been the harm?

But as he felt the bite of the winter night chill him to the core, he realised his mistake. Nigel dragged him from Hannibal's reception and shoved him into a cab. Neither spoke the whole journey. Not as they climbed the steps to the house or even as Nigel packed their belongings.

It was only once they had returned to France the next night that Nigel looked at Will. "Pack your shit."

Will had barely set his suitcase down when he felt the words punch him. "But it's midnight! I can't afford any of the places that are open."

"Should have fucking thought about that before you fucked that slut." Nigel picked open a seam in the mattress and pulled out a packet of white crystals.

"Don't call her that."

Nigel's face hardened and the needle he'd been preparing nearly met Will's cheek. "Don't you *dare* fucking tell me what I can or can't fucking do. You're lucky I fucking love you or I'd have- have…" Nigel would have left Will to Hannibal's dinner table. But the fucking **love** drove him insane.

"Would have what? Killed me? Left me for Margot's brother to feed to the pigs? Or let me go homeless to die of typhus or to be mugged?" Will grabbed his extra coat and picked his suitcase back up.

Nigel watched Will leave in a daze, the prick of his needle sending him to that blissful nowhere place that Will could not touch.

The next stormy morning, Nigel headed to the shops to buy food with some of the money Hannibal had gifted him. He was carrying bags past an alleyway and he expected or *hoped* that he would see Will. But he didn't. Will wasn't there.

Nigel sat in front of the plain canvas and began to paint. It was unlike any of the other pieces he'd done before. There were no demons or myths dancing in the background. There was no symbolism or gore for the sake of gore. It was just of a young homeless man, knelt in the same alleyway he'd passed. Trashcans framed the man and the beanie hat hid his once beautiful brown curls. The once bright blue sapphire eyes were grey and lifeless.

Nigel had been too hasty in his punishment. He had been torn open by Will but now he had ruined him.

Months passed and every day Nigel would visit that alley to try to catch a glimpse of Will there. He never was.

December came by a year later and Nigel was attending the Christmas exhibition and auction, his most acclaimed painting taking pride of place. '*Fallen Angel*' had everything the privileged enjoyed as they nursed their champagnes. It had that untouchable melancholy they would never know. That grief and guilt they'd only ever felt in passing.

Nigel had not painted anything since or told anyone the story of the homeless man in the picture. Will was the mystery who had risen and fallen with one stupid act. And Nigel had been the reason. No… Hannibal had been.

Nigel no longer relied on Hannibal's charity, his money accumulating from royalties and public appearances from his art.

But nothing numbed him from the crippling guilt and grief for how Will was no longer there. Will was likely dead for a while now. One of those nameless people on the slab of some morgue. Buried in a cardboard box or simply cremated.

"Sir, you can't be here. Sir!" Nigel startled from his daydreams and noticed an exhibition host running between the gallery's columns.

A filthy man appeared from behind one and clambered over a red ribbon separating the well-to-do from Nigel's art. Before he could grab the painting, a guard dragged him back from it.

The filthy man yelled madly, thrashing at the guard.

Nigel recognised that voice. He recognised those blue sapphire eyes, greying from a tortured life.

“Will?” Nigel set his glass down and approached as if baring himself to a wild animal.

The filthy man froze, unblinking. “N-Nigel.” His lips were cracked and almost completely hidden from beneath his ungroomed beard. The bodyguard let him go, his legs giving way. He’d been so exhausted, hiding from reality. Hiding from his bloody nightmares and violent memories of his time in New Orleans.

Scooping Will up, Nigel took Will home. It was hard not to cry with overwhelming relief, but Nigel wouldn’t expose himself like that and Will was just too exhausted to.

Will was shaved, bandaged and cleaned up within a few hours but the damage to his mind would take far longer. He wouldn’t talk about his time on the streets, spending night after night hopping from strangers bedrooms to small homeless communities. Even the desperate didn’t want him back after he bit someone’s cheek open during an attack.

But Nigel didn’t know that.

Will sat on the bed in a loose white shirt and pyjama pants, his hair cut back short and nursing a cup of coffee as he flicked through the magazines Nigel had been featured in. He’d not said a word since coming back, ever prepared to be thrown back out.

If he wasn’t, though, he had a lot of new inspiration. But the past year hadn’t been worth it at all.

Sitting beside Will, Nigel pulled out a photograph of a baby. “Alana’s been raising him.” He slipped the picture on the catalogue. “She tried to find you, y’know. To tell you what happened.”

“You don’t need to talk to me like a fucking kid, Nigel.” Will glanced at the photograph, well-aware what this meant. “Where’s Margot?”

“When Mason found out she had a kid…”

Will nodded in understanding and thumbed the picture of his baby son. Alana was raising him because no one else was there to. “She slept with me to have him. To be free from her brother.”

Nigel nodded, resting his forehead on Will’s shoulder. He breathed in Will’s newly clean scent and tears stung his eyes. “Fuck I’ve missed you.”

“I could tell.” Will turned his head slightly and pressed a kiss to where Nigel’s head lay.

They weren’t talking about the betrayal or Hannibal. Or how they’d treated each other so terribly. Will had been dead and Nigel realised he couldn’t live without him. Now he got him back, he wouldn’t let anyone take him away.

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